



Merri-bek
City Council

Community Skills for Climate Action

May – September 2021

Impact report



Merri-bek
City Council



Image: Matt Krumins

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Greater long-term inclusion and resilience in the climate movement

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek.

Delivering social, economic and environmental value for community and Council

The Community Skills for Climate Action program held across the cities of Darebin, Yarra and Merri-bek from May to September 2021, piloted a new model of community-Council collaboration and capacity building.

The tri-Council collaboration involved:

- 50-75** participating community members 
- 466** people directly impacted through their networks 
- 9x** 2-hour workshops 
- 12** guest speakers 

To understand the impact of the program an evaluation was undertaken to understand what the qualitative and quantitative outputs, outcomes and impacts of the program have been almost a year on.

Participant feedback

- 100%** of participants surveyed found it met expectations or exceeded them
- 89%** of participants surveyed stated that they felt more confident in taking climate action since being involved in the program
- 100%** of participants surveyed found the level of Council support a very positive element

“Completely moving, inspiring, mind-opening, and direction-changing.”

“The ‘collective we’ are more motivated and understanding of the landscape... We felt very enabled....”

“Credit to the three Council's for conceptualising it, and, making sure it reached into all types of little groups.”

Participants considered the program to be a positive influence on their behaviour and ability to take action. It increased personal agency and capacity to deliver climate action. In particular, it raised awareness and holistic thinking around how to be inclusive of diverse voices and to work with people where they were at.

Economic and environmental highlights

- 31-1** leverage on Council investment, being an upfront investment of \$32,033 resulting in \$988,672 of value, largely community investment 
- \$129,436** Value of communications and engagement 
- 1,444** in-kind and volunteer hours contributed 
- 22** electric vehicles purchased with an approximate saving of 101 tonnes Co2 per annum 

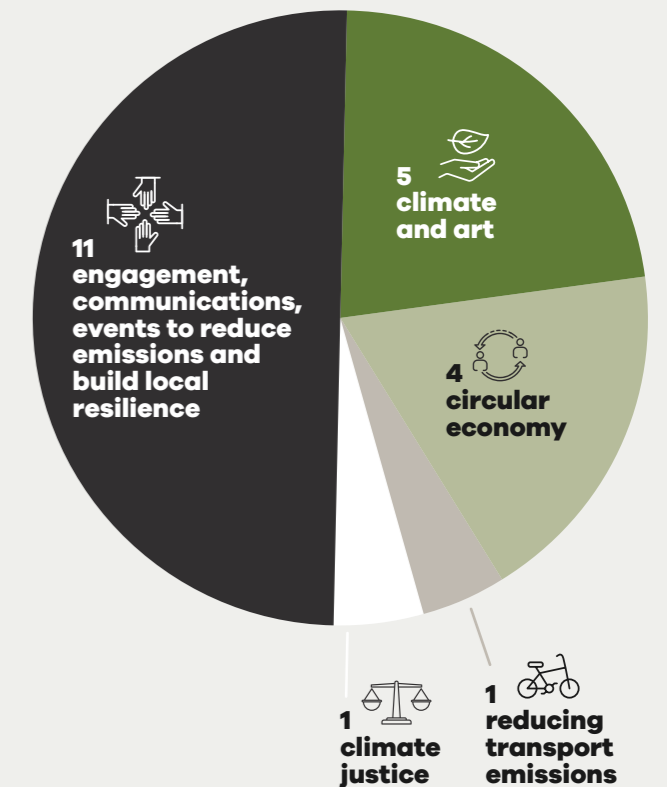
Numbers from Social Impact Tool initially developed by Akin Consulting, Community Power Agency and UTS for the Victorian Government Community Power Hub program. Assumptions can only be drawn from nationally recognised sources.

Social value

- The program delivered the following social value to the Councils:
- » Built trust and working relationships between Council and community
 - » Increased networking
 - » Supported action and educated community members
 - » Engaged marginalised groups
 - » Delivered higher quality grant applications

22 community project ideas generated

The projects had the following themes:



Council staff feedback

- “The community...participated in the building of new climate alliances which are bringing a range of climate active community groups together.”
- “I love knowing there is a bunch of people there that I can ask for advice or to get the message out there. The participants are sort of an advisory group.”

Growing a broader climate action movement across inner Melbourne

The Community Skills for Climate Action program delivered a proof-of-concept program across inner Melbourne in 2021.

The program aimed to grow a broader movement of diverse groups and individuals actively leading and engaged in community-focused climate action. This outcome was highly successful and saw increased participation – especially across multicultural and artistic communities.

1,853 people engaged



28 flow on events



50% of projects developed focused on communications, engagement and events



Participant feedback

100% of participants surveyed considered it very or extremely important to broaden the movement both directly after the program and 10 months later

“The more people engaged as catalysts for change, the greater the impact. Change often happens slowly until tipping points are reached.”

“Many skilled, professional people feel compelled to act but struggle to find an avenue that is right for them.”

79% of participants remained directly involved in initiating, planning, or delivering a Climate Action initiative, 10 months later

“I didn't know many people... I've been here for 6 years... this group really broadened my climate action, I now see lots of really local things happening.”

“It got groups that didn't normally talk about it - to talk about it.”

Workshop highlight – Climate Justice and First Nations Leadership

Image: Matt Krumins

The session explored what changes are needed to genuinely (move towards) embedding climate justice and First Nations leadership into our climate action and what are the benefits of doing so.

The guest speaker was Yin Paradis, Professor and Chair in Race Relations at Deakin University, Naarm.



26% of participants surveyed directly after the program said this workshop was their favourite part of the program

37% stated it was transformative for their perspective

By coming together in this way, people who had been involved over the long term and people who were newly engaged were able to see the scale of the connections in the group. This brought a hopefulness about the possibilities that could occur.

Particularly during COVID-19 lockdowns, it was an opportunity for connection across the communities.

Participant feedback

The following graphic shows the participants feedback around broadening the localised climate movement:



Local collective action projects

The Community Skills for Climate Action program, supported people to work together. Collaboration empowered them to lead and advocate for more effective, urgent, large-scale, sustained, meaningful and collective climate action.

Facilitated introductions between organisations and volunteers



Incubated initiatives



Supported new friendships



Connected like-minded groups



Participant feedback

At the end of the program:

100% of participants surveyed felt the program supported them to take climate action with others in their community

100% of participants made useful connections and partnerships

69% of participants improved their understanding of the local climate networks

“We need to be inclusive and hear what each other are doing, to seek out and listen to local knowledge and that the movement needs to be collaborative. This provides us with an alternative, a way of reimagining how our society can be more democratic and participatory, not just for climate action, but for society as a whole”



Participant feedback

10 months on:

79% of participants made useful new relationships and collaborative partnerships

Involvement increased understanding about the role of Council, Council initiatives and Council officers

68% becoming aware or accessing Council grants and/or sustainability programs

“The connections in this groups I didn't know about before.... familiar faces in council to support with ideas/funding opportunities and other resources.”

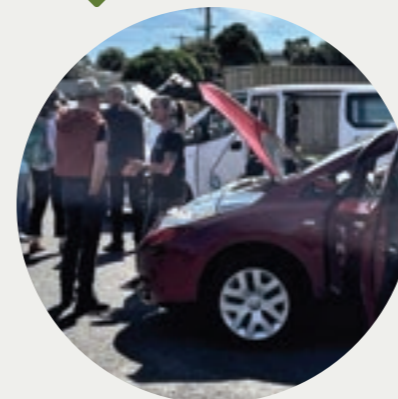
“A much better sense of where my kind of personality skillset can be utilised in a collective. To not sweat the small stuff and think bigger picture.”

“I am connected with others, and more likely to think about how I can multiply impact by utilising my local climate action network.”

A year on from the program, participants reflected on the relationships that were sparked during this program and how they have expanded the viewpoints and collaborations. Whether it be following others on social media, attending new events such as rewilding workshops or a candidates' forums that they hadn't known about previously, participants in general, shared an increase in overall engagement.

Image: Matt Krumins

Collaborative project highlights



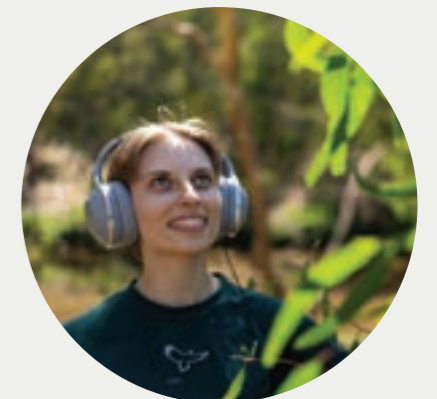
Electric Vehicle bulk buy

Led by Darebin Climate Action Now, funding from Darebin City Council and in-kind promotional support from Merri-bek and Yarra Council's and community groups resulting in 22 EVs totaling 902kWh sold locally.



Grow Eat Together

Funded by Merri-bek City Council and hosted by Reynard St Neighbourhood House. The event focused on gardening, food sharing, climate action conversation and music. A Spring Garden Festival was then held 6 months later.



Big Local Climate Arts Expo

Funded by City of Yarra and featuring 40 local artists working in innovative ways to engage the public in climate action. 733 people watched the series of 4 livestreamed events.

Greater long-term inclusion and resilience in the climate movement

The Community Skills for Climate Action program, piloted a new way building a thriving climate action network across inner Melbourne.

This program resulted in genuine community level and personal impacts for the participants.

Participant feedback

At the end of the program:

82% of participants surveyed stated that they felt more confident to reach out to groups that are underrepresented.

“Totally, shifting the ways I acted in the past. Very excited to collaborate with different groups (and working on developing cross-cultural competency and skills)”

90% stated they intended to stay involved in climate action as a result of this program.

“I know now there are people in the community that care about the same things I do. Together we care and belong. Keep doing this course very important for a sense of belonging to community.”



Focus groups showed that the program played a significant connector role between community groups, some had long term leadership in environmental advocacy and others were engaging for the first time. The program held the space for these diverse groups to come together. Holding the program during COVID-19 presented some challenges, but also presented an opportunity for connection and collective action.

Participant feedback

10 months on:

68% are now engaged in additional climate related groups or activities

“With some people I didn't connect but could see their messages, this helped during pandemic, feeling overwhelmed with climate anxiety - helped being putting in a positive mindset”

92% perceive the skills, knowledge or networks from the Program have assisted in this.

“The climate posters I make have become part of the visual street culture around the inner north. People notice them, are familiar with them and the messages. They model a generous and creative response to the climate emergency.”

17% felt the skills, knowledge or networks developed through the program assisted them in future employment opportunities

“Taking chances on new connections has paid off. I've directly worked with and amplified the voices of people who have incredible knowledge and offerings to the climate action movement.”

Resilience highlights

10 months on:

- » increased determination
- » deepening commitment to climate action
- » hopefulness about the future
- » increased local connectivity and belonging
- » greater awareness of First People's justice
- » sharing power when mobilising community
- » lower climate anxiety through taking action
- » increased mobilisation to support Council activities
- » importance of supporting existing groups



